



The official newsletter of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Leadership Team

April 2023



(L-R): New Social and Emotional Wellbeing Officers Nickita Wylie and Jesse Blackman

Supporting our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

Metro North Health has employed two new Social and Emotional Wellbeing Officers to provide culturally responsive support for staff.

Throughout the Metro North health equity journey, one of the key themes that arose from discussions with community and staff was advocating and supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

Metro North Health recognises the community's need to see an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in all areas and professions of the health service to provide ongoing support and cultural guidance of patients and their care, services, and other staff members. The increase in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce also provides an increase in workforce opportunities within the local community.

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Give us feedback

We welcome your feedback, contributions, story ideas and details on any upcoming events. Please contact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team at A_TSIHU_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au or phone 07 3139 3235.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team

If you have any feedback regarding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team services, programs and initiatives, you can contact the following:

Mail to:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team, Building 26, Chermiside Community Health Centre, 490 Hamilton Road, Chermiside QLD 4032.

Email to:

A_TSIHU_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au

Metro North Hospital and Health Service would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which our services are located.

We pay our respects to all Elders past, present and future and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the state.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this publication may contain images or names of people who have passed away.

Contact information

Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital	
Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer	Ph: 3646 4154 / 0428 861 888
After hours	PH 3647 4183 / 0428 861 888
The Prince Charles Hospital	
Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer	Ph: 3139 5165 / 0436 690 306
After Hours	Ph: 3139 6429 / 0429 897 982
Redcliffe Hospital	
Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer	Ph: 3049 6791
After Hours	Ph: 3049 9734
Caboolture/Kilcoy Hospital	
Indigenous Hospital Liaison Office	Ph: 5433 8249
After Hours	Ph: 5316 5481
Surgical, Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS):	
Indigenous Hospital Liaison Office	Ph: 3647 6044
Community Indigenous Primary Health Team	
Indigenous Community Health Team	Ph: 3631 7379
Indigenous Sexual Health Team	
Clinical Nurse Consultant	Ph: 3631 7379
Indigenous Mental Health	
Professional Lead	Ph: 3646 2695
Ngarrama Maternity Services	
Caboolture	Ph: 0439 732 970
Redcliffe	Ph: 0407 251 890
Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital	Ph: 0428 404 875
Forensic Mental Health Service, Indigenous Mental Health Intervention Program	
Forensic Mental Health Team	Ph: 3234 0800

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A word from the Executive Director



Sherry Holzapfel
Executive Director,
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Health

In March we acknowledged National Close the Gap Day, an important and timely opportunity for our staff to reflect on our roles with closing the health gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Metro North Health region have poorer self-assessed health, a higher prevalence of long-term conditions, and an increased burden of disease compared to non-Indigenous people. In 2011, an eight-year health adjusted life expectancy gap existed between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the Metro North Health region compared to the total Queensland population.

Metro North Health is committed to providing equity of access to high quality health care services and building relationships based on inclusion with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities and remains committed to achieve life expectancy parity for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples by 2031. We are well on our way to making meaningful impact through the Metro North Health Equity Strategy 2022-2025. This year's theme for Close the Gap Day "Strong Culture, Strong Youth: Our Legacy, Our Future" highlights the vital role of culture in achieving positive long-term health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

To coincide with Close the Gap Day I was proud to launch the new nursing and midwifery scrubs across Metro North Health along with Metro North Health executives Alanna Geary, Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, and Chief Executive Jackie Hanson. The new scrubs feature Aboriginal artwork created by esteemed Aboriginal artist Elaine Chambers-Hegarty.

In 2019 Metro North Health commissioned Elaine Chambers-Hegarty to create localised artworks for each clinical directorate including Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, The Prince Charles Hospital, Redcliffe Hospital, Caboolture and Kilcoy Hospitals, Community and Oral Health, and Metro North Mental Health. Artworks were later created for the Surgical, Treatment and Rehabilitation Service, Metro North Oral Health and the Strong Start to Life project. Each facility now has their scrubs designed from the specialised artwork that staff can elect to wear.

I would like to say a special thank you to Alanna and Jackie for their amazing support in making this great initiative happen and ongoing support of our health equity agenda. I cannot wait to see the beautiful display of these scrubs throughout the facilities.

Metro North Health recently held the second Health Equity Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Showcase. We had an amazing turn out of Metro North Health staff and executives, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and Elders all getting together to celebrate, listen and learn about some of the deadly work and initiatives happening across Metro North. As always, I am so thrilled and proud to attend these events. Just being able to sit and yarn with our Elders and community and share in this journey together, seeing the hard work of staff and services dedicated to improving health outcomes for our mob is incredible.

I am passionate about our Health Equity agenda and the possibilities it brings to improving our care and services delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Until next time, stay safe and deadly.

Sherry Holzapfel
Executive Director, Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Health



A word from the Chief Executive

Metro North is fully committed to achieving health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and ensuring that we create culturally safe and welcoming environments for staff, patients and visitors.

At the annual Health Equity Showcase I was extremely pleased to put my name to our Statement of Commitment which outlines our intent to achieve health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in both health outcomes and life expectancy by 2031. The statement includes both our vision and the practical steps we will take to make it a reality.

Kind regards,
Jackie Hanson
Chief Executive , Metro North Health



Statement of Commitment Our Journey Towards Health Equity

“Health Equity to me means hope and opportunity. Hope that my family, community and future generations will finally have the health care and support they need and deserve in a safe and unbiased way. Hope that our peoples’ health disparity will improve. It means finally a great opportunity for our people’s voices to be heard and for health services to listen. Opportunity to give our people a chance to have a say in how health services should be providing health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Health Equity is finally putting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health to the forefront on everyone’s agenda and making it the utmost priority to finally make change. It means everyone and every health service taking action (doing, not talking).”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumer.

This is a statement of intent – between Metro North Hospital and Health Service and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’, supported by non-Indigenous Australians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous health organisations – to work together to achieve equality in health status and life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ and non-Indigenous Australians by the year 2031.

We share a determination to close the fundamental divide between the health outcomes and life expectancy of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ of Australia and non-Indigenous Australians.

We are committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ have equal life opportunities to all other Australians.

We are committed to working towards ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ have access to health services to the best standard available ensuring health outcomes are equal to those enjoyed by other Australians, and enjoy conditions that support their social, emotional and cultural well-being.

We recognise that specific measures are needed to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ access to health services. Crucial to ensuring equal access to health services is ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are actively involved in the design, delivery, and control of these services.

Metro North Hospital and Health Service commits to:

- Implementing Our Journey Towards Health Equity Metro North Health Equity Strategy 2022–2025 to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will receive high quality person centred care that is culturally responsive, empowers self-care and choice and is designed to improve health and wellbeing.
- Ensure the full participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ voices and their representative bodies in all aspects of addressing their health needs.
- Strengthen a culturally capable workforce where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees are supported and valued for their contribution.
- Enhancing visibility of outcomes to Close the Gap and the contributions and roles of the individual, the service, the health sector, and other social sectors.
- Identified joint planning and strategies with our key stakeholders such as Brisbane North Primary Health Care Network, Institute for Urban Indigenous Health, Research Alliance for Urban Goori Health and other relevant organisations and agencies.
- Continue our journey towards reconciliation, with all areas now introducing Reconciliation Action Plans to strengthen relationships, respect and reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.
- Create an environment across Metro North Health that stops Institutional Racism and unconscious bias.

Adj Assoc Prof Jackie Hanson
Chief Executive
Metro North Health

Jim McGowan AM
Board Chair
Metro North Health

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BreastScreen Queensland



*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Women's Sistas Shawl*

Get your
free Sistas
Shawl!

Stay healthy and strong for your Mob

BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane Northside Service would like to invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to book their free breast screen.

We offer breast screening to women aged 40 and over. Breast screening is most effective for women aged 50 to 74.

A Sistas Shawl will be given to women attending their breast screen, which can also be used as a privacy wrap. The Sistas Shawl aims to provide a sense of safety and comfort for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Brisbane Northside Locations:

- Chermside
- Brisbane City
- Indooroopilly
- Keperra
- Redcliffe
- North Lakes

To find out more or to make an appointment
call us on **13 20 50** or go to
breastscreen.qld.gov.au



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As part of the *Health Equity Strategy 2022-2025*, Metro North Health identified the need to provide ongoing support systems to ensure safety of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce. It is a key priority of the hospital and health service to make the organisation a place where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are proud and feel safe to work for and receive health care from.

In response to this priority, Jesse Blackman and Nickita Wylie joined Metro North Health in March as Social and Emotional Wellbeing Officers (SEWB Officers). Jesse is a proud Gurang man and Nickita is a South Sea Islander and Aboriginal woman with ancestral ties to Bundjalung.

“The Social and Emotional Wellbeing program will support staff in a holistic approach as the team will work alongside a staff member to ensure their holistic needs are identified and supported. This allows staff to work in a respectful and culturally safe space where their values and beliefs are respected,” said Nickita.

Both officers have extensive experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, bringing a wealth of knowledge from health and youth justice.

“I have come to the Social and Emotional Wellbeing team from The Prince Charles Hospital as their Cultural Capability Officer, which I was in for about 8 months,” Jesse said.

“Before this I spent 15 years working in Youth Justice spending majority of this time working in client facing roles. More recently I was managing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Unit at Brisbane Youth Detention Centre, and then on the West Moreton Youth Detention Centre as Unit Manager.”

Nickita joins the SEWB team with a background in nursing and aged care.

“I have been a nurse for the past 11 years with grounded knowledge from listening, supporting, and caring for respected Elders whilst working within Aged Care and the community sector,” Nickita said.

“My calling led me to share and educate undergraduate health professions through the Griffith University First Peoples Health Unit for 6 years, enabling the capability of culturally safe practitioners.

“My combined passion for nursing and education led me to my recent roles as a nursing facilitator, and more recent as a nursing consultant/educator supporting staff to deliver a national program supporting the social emotional wellbeing of first-time mothers with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies.”

Jesse and Nickita are both passionate about supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within Metro North Health and building respectful relationships to get a better understanding of staff needs and how they can fulfill their role to meet these needs.

“What I am most passionate about is helping staff to keep strong in their culture and staff connected with each other. I believe as an Aboriginal man that one of our greatest strengths is our connection to one another and to Country,” said Jesse.

OUTandABOUT

Strengthening relationships through connection

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service at The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH) held a consumer and community connection day in late February, providing an informal and culturally safe environment for TPCH staff and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to connect with one another and strengthen relationships.

The day involved the official opening of the newly established TPCH Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community and Consumer Council, made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, staff and executives, and included a traditional smoking ceremony and naming ceremony led by Shannon Ruska from Tribal Experiences.

Committed to achieving health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the new council will meet regularly to work towards improving the delivery of services and care provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, families, and carers attending TPCH.

The council will provide an opportunity for the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to be heard and help shape services at TPCH ensuring they meet the cultural and spiritual needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities accessing these services.



TPCH staff and executives pictured alongside community members and Tribal Experiences

OUTandABOUT

Anniversary of the National Apology

On February 13, Metro North Health honoured and acknowledged the 15-year anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations, when then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised to the Stolen Generations and their families for the traumatic and unjust acts committed as part of national policy. This date marks a significant time in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, a time for mourning and a time for healing.

In some families, children from three or more generations were removed, breaking important cultural, spiritual, and family ties which has left a lasting and intergenerational impact on the lives and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Metro North Health is committed to listening and sharing the voices of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community whose truth telling can lead to greater reconciliation and health equity. Across Metro North, we continue to develop and implement Reconciliation Action Plans to support local activities and partnerships with community.

Localised events were held across Metro North Health with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community, staff and the broader Metro North Health executive, staff and services joining together in unity to reflect and remember.



Chief Executive Officer Adjunct Professor Jackie Hanson with Elder Uncle Alan Parsons on the Anniversary of the National Apology



CKW Yarning Table

Caboolture and Kilcoy Hospitals and Woodford Corrections Health (CKW) staff are passionate about creating a culturally safe and equitable health service supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, families, and community.

Co-designing services and information sharing with local community is a key priority for CKW as they work towards achieving health equity. The creation of their new CKW Yarning Table provides a great platform to connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and community to engage, listen and learn from firsthand experiences.

The CKW Yarning Table is a bi-monthly casual gathering for staff to meet and yarn with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, Elders, and organisations, rotating between

Caboolture and Kilcoy hospitals, sharing in knowledge to help improve patient experience and services for mob when accessing their hospital and health services.

“It’s about practicing a co-design process for information sharing and learning from a hospital and community perspective and providing a safe space for all to come and yarn, learn about what is happening in the hospital and what the [yarning table] member wants to see happen,” said Tracy Grant, CKW Manager for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

The first CKW Yarning table was held in March in Caboolture with Traditional Owners, community Elders, community organisational representatives and Caboolture Hospital staff all in attendance sharing stories, yarning and learning from each other.

“It was a very successful and well attended event. It exceeded our expectation. The yarns that happened around the table was very informative, heartfelt and a sense of cultural safety to yarn, share your story and listen,” said Tracy.

Community members and staff attending first CKW Yarning Table



OUTandABOUT

Connecting with community via social media

In 2020, the Metro North Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team (A&TSILT) launched the Better Together Health Van Facebook page. The Facebook page quickly outgrew its initial purpose and has now become a trusted and popular social media platform within community, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can access accurate and up to date health information.

The A&TSILT have recently launched two new social media platforms, an Instagram page, and a LinkedIn page, and have changed the name of the social media platforms to reflect the great work taking place across Metro North Health to achieve health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Follow us on our journey towards health equity!

Follow us on social media to keep up to date with what's going on across Metro North Health.



Facebook:
Better Together - Our Health, Our Way



Instagram:
@ourhealthourway



LinkedIn:
Better Together - Our Health, Our Way



The Better Together – Our Health, Our Way platforms are dedicated to sharing culturally safe and responsive health information and workforce opportunities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Brisbane northside and beyond, as well as celebrating and acknowledging the great work of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

Follow us on our journey towards health equity! Scan the QR codes above to view our social media platforms, or search for us on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn using the details above.

Celebrating our Corporate Business Services staff

Metro North Health recently held the inaugural 2023 Corporate Business Services Awards to recognise the contribution Corporate Business Services make across our health service.

For demonstrating a strong commitment to our values – respect, teamwork, compassion, high performance, and integrity, we are delighted to announce that respected staff member and proud Aboriginal woman Debra Devers was the winner of the People Focus award.

Deb is a Yanyuwa woman with family from the Borroloola area in the Gulf of Carpentaria and has grown up on Turrbal Country in Cherside, Queensland.

Working as an Administration Officer within the finance team at Metro North Health, coming up to 10 years this October, Deb supports the team to ensure the efficient and effective completion of assigned tasks within the work area, so that the goals within the finance team are achieved.

“Helping people is something that comes naturally. As long as I can help people to get their job done, then I’m happy,” said Deb.

Totally surprised, but honoured by receiving this award, Deb feels all who were nominated are champions as well.

Congratulations Deb, on this very well-deserved award.



Debra Devers, winner of the People Focus award, pictured alongside Metro North Health Chief Finance and Corporate Officer Alister Whitta



**VIRTUAL
ED** 

If you need to visit an Emergency Department, try the Virtual ED first.



To check if you are eligible*:

- Scan the QR code or
- Visit metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/hospitals-services/virtual-ed

Open 8am to 10pm, 7 days

**Note: Not all medical problems are suitable for the Virtual ED, so it's important to check your eligibility first. You must reside, be visiting or receive your treatment in Queensland.*



In an Emergency

Dial Triple Zero (000)

Please dial 000 IMMEDIATELY if you have a life-threatening condition or require urgent medical help.



A Metro North Health initiative



**Queensland
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Your foot health, Closer to home



Deadly Feet is a specialist outreach service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We provide culturally safe care closer to home.

We can help you look after your feet, and help your feet stay healthy.

We can help you stay healthy if you have any of the following:

- ✓ Have any concerns about your feet
- ✓ Have sore legs when you walk
- ✓ Have diabetes
- ✓ Have kidney problems
- ✓ Smoke, or used to smoke.



Get in touch with us for more information

For more information, have a chat with your nurse, doctor, or Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer.

You can also scan the QR code, call or email the team to see if you're eligible to take part: (07) 3647 1500 or MNVOP@health.qld.gov.au



IN FOCUS

New program supporting foot care closer to home

A new specialist outreach service providing foot care closer to home for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has now commenced in Metro North Health.

The Deadly Feet Program, which can be accessed at no cost to the patient, aims to help patients manage their foot health by providing early detection and treatment of foot irregularity, and assist in the placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients to local healthcare settings closer to home.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are eligible for the Deadly Feet program if they have any of the following:

- Have any concerns about their feet
- Have sore legs when walking
- Have diabetes
- Have kidney problems
- Smoke, or used to smoke

To ensure the delivery of culturally appropriate and safe care, the Deadly Feet team have consulted regularly with the Metro North Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team and have attended community meetings in the Metro North catchment to gain community feedback and input about the delivery of the new service.

The first Deadly Feet clinic will be held at Redcliffe Hospital in late April, with the program expected to expand to other regions around Queensland in mid-2023. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients will be supported by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health worker who will be on site at the Redcliffe clinic to provide support at the time of the appointment.



Michelle and Annie are supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as part of the Deadly Feet program

For more information about the Deadly Feet program, have a chat with your local health worker, doctor, or Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer, or visit the Deadly Feet website: <https://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/rbwh/healthcare-services/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander/deadly-feet>.

New Nursing and Midwifery Scrubs

On Close the Gap Day, Metro North Health proudly announced a new suite of nursing and midwifery scrubs featuring dedicated localised artwork by esteemed Aboriginal artist Elaine Chambers-Hegarty.



The original concept for nursing scrubs featuring Aboriginal artwork was created by the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Transforming Emergency Departments towards Cultural Safety (TECS) working group. The group has been working successfully with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to understand their concerns and look at ways to make the department culturally safe and welcoming for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers.

With broader interest from staff wanting to show their support for working towards improved health outcomes for mob, and positive community feedback, Metro North Health created a suite of scrubs for all nursing and midwifery staff to wear if they choose.

Each Metro North directorate has their own localised and specialised artwork telling the story of their local area. The artworks have been showcased throughout each of the hospitals – Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Surgical Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS), The Prince Charles Hospital, Redcliffe Hospital, Caboolture Hospital, Kilcoy Hospital and Community and Oral Health Services, and will now be showcased through the new nursing and midwifery scrub uniforms.

The scrubs, which will be seen across the health services from June 2023, are a culturally inclusive display within Metro North Health and an opportunity to celebrate the culture, history, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Uncle Rodney sharing his positive experience with A&TSILT staff members a few months after discharge from hospital

Respected Elder overcomes fear of healthcare system

When Pastor Uncle Rodney Minniecon, a Gurang Gurang and Kabi Kabi man from Bundaberg Queensland, travelled to Brisbane as a Minister, he fell severely unwell for the first time in over 60 years. Living in a small town in Cairns called Deeral, Uncle Rodney had limited knowledge and exposure of the healthcare system. A fear of hospitals deterred Uncle Rodney from accessing the medical care he urgently needed, and he tried everything in his power to avoid a trip to the hospital.

“I was scared of the hospital. I was scared of needles and scared of the nurses. If I got sick, I tried my hardest to cure myself,” said Uncle Rodney.

At 78 years young, Uncle Rodney became so unwell that a trip to the hospital could no longer be avoided. The pain Uncle Rodney was experiencing was so severe that he wasn't able to attend church as he normally would, so he rang his daughter Kim, and asked her to take him to the hospital.

Fortunately for Uncle Rodney, his daughter Kim worked for Metro North Health, at the time positioned within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team, and was able to provide Uncle Rodney with reassurance that he would be safe and taken care of in the hospital.

Upon arrival at The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH) Emergency Department, Uncle Rodney was admitted right away, with his daughter Kim still close by his side. The fear that Uncle Rodney once had of hospitals and healthcare staff quickly disappeared thanks to the kind, patient, and gentle care he received by staff at TPCH.

“I felt instantly that a lot of the fear had left me. They fussed over me a bit, and the way I was treated, I felt like I was treated like somebody very special,” said Uncle Rodney.

Attending ongoing appointments to monitor his health, Uncle Rodney now has a lot of confidence when attending the hospital thanks to the care he received from staff, and his daughter Kim, who helps coordinate his appointments, ensures he gets there safely and offers to stay by his side when needed.

What initially felt like bad news, having to attend hospital, soon turned into a positive and joyous experience for Uncle Rodney, who now has the confidence to seek medical care and engage with healthcare professionals.

“When they were going to release me from hospital, I didn't want to come home. I asked them ‘can I stay another night?’” said Uncle Rodney.

By sharing his positive experience, Uncle Rodney hopes to encourage other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly men, to seek the medical care they need.

“I can recommend to any of the old fullas, don't be afraid of the hospitals. I know that some things did happen in the past, but this hospital is one hospital that took all the fear out of me and gave me a lot of confidence in the medical system,” said Uncle Rodney.

Uncle Rodney would like to thank the staff at The Prince Charles Hospital, and all Metro North Health staff, for the kindness they showed him, and for making him feel safe and cared for.



Uncle Rodney receiving fantastic care at TPCH in late 2022



Metro North Health Chief Executive Jackie Hanson (second from the right) pictured alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders

Keeping our community informed

Metro North Health is committed to achieving health equity and life expectancy parity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by 2031 and providing equity of access to high quality health care services across our Hospital and Health Service.

On 1 March 2023, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and community members were invited to join Metro North Health staff at the first Health Equity Showcase of the year, to hear from a range of teams and services who are working towards improving the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The day included an opportunity to connect and yarn over a catered morning-tea, afternoon-tea and lunch, and an overview and update from the following 12 services across Metro North Health:

- Connecting Care to Country – IROC/ICOP Rural and Remote Access
- Metro North Mental Health – Health Equity Initiatives
- Women’s Business Shared Pathway
- Doing things differently for Cultural Safety by embedding a First Nations Senior Health Worker in the Emergency Department – RBWH
- Deadly RED
- Breast Screen Queensland Brisbane Northside Service – Sistas Shawl Project
- Better Together Medication Access (BTMA)
- Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outpatients at RBWH
- Deadly Feet Outreach Program
- People and Culture Equity Workforce Activities
- Deadly Start Program
- Improving access to tertiary and quaternary health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

Whilst the day was an opportunity to provide an update to community of the great work taking place across Metro North Health, the health equity showcase also provided a great platform for community members to share with us their patient journey experiences, and how we as a health service can improve the delivery of care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing Metro North Health services.

To achieve health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Metro North Health must be bold and brave, and do things differently, and most importantly, engage our community every step of the way.



RBWH Emergency Department receives Al Spilman Award for Culturally Safe Emergency Departments

The RBWH Emergency and Trauma Centre (ETC) was recently awarded the Al Spilman Award for Culturally Safe Emergency Departments from the Australian College of Emergency Medicine (ACEM).

The award recognises the outstanding efforts of ACEM accredited emergency departments to provide cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori patients, visitors, and staff.

The RBWH ETC was proud to receive the award for their ongoing work to improve the cultural safety of the department for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and their families. The initiative has been pioneered by the Transforming Emergency Departments towards Cultural Safety (TECS) committee in partnership with members of the RBWH Reconciliation Action Plan working group.

The RBWH TECS committee was formed in 2019 and is led by proud Torres Strait Islander woman and Emergency Nurse Kiris Reis. The TECS team has worked to secure funding to implement a number of initiatives to make the ETC more culturally safe and welcoming. The team work closely with local community groups such as the Brisbane North Elders to ensure the initiatives they peruse make a valuable difference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

RBWH ETC Clinical Nurse Kiris Reis said the ETC team are thrilled to receive such a prestigious award thanks to the range of successful initiatives they have implemented in the department.

“We are excited to announce that following a highly successful pilot, Metro North Health have recently committed to funding a permanent, ongoing First Nations Health Worker position in the ED,” Kiris said.

“This position is responsible for ensuring the ETC considers the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations patients, visitors and staff, delivering clinical care and follow-up of First Nations patients and their families, ensuring the care we deliver is culturally safe, reducing the proportion of First Nations patients having incomplete ED visits and much more.

“Our model of care in the ED has been widely embraced by both staff and patients, with First Nations patients reporting that they feel better informed and more secure in comparison to previous models of care. We want to ensure our First Nations patients feel self-empowered and engaged.

“Finally, I’d like to provide a special mention to Laura Stephenson, Nikesh Kumar, Julie Allen and Louise Cullen, plus the entire TECS and ETC teams, who have all been instrumental in receiving this award.”

Congratulations to the ETC for leading the way in creating a culturally safe RBWH.



WORD OF THE MONTH

“Jimbelung”

(Jim-beh-lun)
is Friend in
Yugambeh
language

The Yugambeh language is spoken between the Logan and Tweed Rivers in South-East Queensland – there are several dialects across the language Nation including Gugingin, Bullongin, Wangeriburra, Munanjali, Kombumerri, Migunberri, Birinburra and Minjungbal.

Yugambeh has shared words with neighbouring languages of Bundjalung to the South, Yugara to the North and Yugarabul to the West. The following list identifies a selection of everyday words and their suggested pronunciation.

STAFF PROFILE

A Day in the life of: Karen Francisco

Senior Project Officer, Opportunistic Bowel Screening Program

Q1. Tell me about your family history and where you come from?

I am a proud Mandandanji woman from St George South-West Queensland.

Q2. What is your role within Metro North Health?

My role is a Senior Project Officer in the Opportunistic Bowel Screening Project.

Q3. Before starting in your current role, where did you work?

I am on a 6-month secondment from the Queensland Children's Hospital. I was doing two roles, one of them being a Senior Indigenous Health Co-ordinator in the Connected Care Program and a Principal Project Officer in the Queensland Paediatric Sepsis Program as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lead.

Q4. What or who inspired you to pursue a career in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health?

My children are my biggest inspiration as I wanted to be a great role model for them, I have always wanted to work in health to help my mob make healthier decisions about their own health. I want to be part of health intervention and prevention to help mob live a longer life as too many people around me were dying too young, including my father.

Q5. What has been a career highlight for you?

My biggest career highlight is knowing that families can trust and approach me with their healthcare choices and decisions. I have had to wear lots of different hats in my health career, too many to mention, but I love seeing great health outcomes for families who were unsure of their decision making in crisis.

Q6. What do you hope to achieve in your role over the next six months?

I want to increase bowel screening awareness so that inpatients can be comfortable and confident to complete their bowel screening test in a culturally safe environment with education provided by our Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officers. I want to ensure that I contribute to working towards closing the gap so they can be around to watch their kids, grandchildren and great grandchildren grow up. I always like meeting and working with new colleagues to develop new working relationships as together we can holistically make a difference to a patient's journey.

Q7. What do you like to do outside of work?

My time outside of work is making lifelong memories with my fiancé, kids, grandchildren, and friends. I also love watching rugby league and shopping.





Metro North Health

Better Together Health Van

The Better Together Health Van is a free community service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living on the North Side of Brisbane (from Brisbane River to Kilcoy), providing access to:

- Health promotion and education
- Opportunistic health screening
- An avenue to yarn with a health care provider to provide feedback on hospital experience and healthcare journey
- Opportunity to co-design healthcare services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers and supporting health staff.

How to access the Van?

Visit our website for up-to-date locations of the Van
metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/better-together-van

Follow our Facebook Page @ BetterTogetherHealthVan for information on locations, upcoming events, important health information and community stories.

Make a booking

If you would like to request the Van visits your community or event, contact the Metro North Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team to make a booking on (07) 3139 6621 or email Bettersogetherhealthvan@health.qld.gov.au

The service is owned and operated by Metro North Health. The Better Together Health Van will be utilised as an extension of Metro North Health in creating engagement activities and developing partnerships and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers, families and community organisations.

We welcome your feedback, contributions, story ideas and details on any upcoming events.

Please contact the Manager, Communications at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team on A_TSIHU_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au or phone (07) 3139 3235.

